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k Times News Service

According to Cuban Premier Fidel Castro, Cuban missile forces are in control of the island here in 1962 by the Soviet

Union and are prepared to shoot at United States U-2 reconnaissance planes if "legal means" cannot be found to put an end to such flights. Cuban missile crews, Castro said, are fully trained and man the weapons.

In a six-hour conversation with this writer, the Cu-

ban leader insisted that enough Soviet military technicians were left in Cuba to form "a solid combat force" that would fight against any "actual invasion" of the island by the U. S. or "some other country instigated by the United States."

"I don't mean something like the Bay of Pigs," Castro said. "I mean an actual invasion by the armed forces of the United States or by such another country."

Asked if it was true that the since-ousted Nikita S. Khrushchev had urged him not to use the missiles to shoot down American U-2's, Castro answered:

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Use Missiles Against U-2s

"We are absolutely opposed to U-2 flights. But for a long time the Sam's (surface-to-air-missiles) were not under our control. We did not have the personnel trained to use them.

"However, when our forces took over control of the SAM'S the arrangement carried with it an obligation not to proceed unilaterally in shooting at U-2 flights. The commitment we assumed was that all legal means to put an end to U-2 flights should first be exhausted. But this is not a commitment for an indefinite period. The SAM's are now under Cuban control."

Castro disclosed that there were many more Soviet troops in Cuba during the 1962 missile crisis than had been estimated. He said:

"That figure is still secret but I can tell you it was much larger than the figures published. The figures published said 22,000."

The Cuban leader contended that relations between Havana and Moscow had not been altered substantially by Khrushchev's fall from power because "Cuba's relations are with the Soviet state and the Soviet Communist

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Party; they are not between individuals." He added:

"We desire to strengthen our ties with Russia and, if circumstances require it for our security, the possibility of an alliance would not be excluded."

The conversation lasted from just before midnight until after 6 a.m., October 30. Juan de Onis, a correspondent of the New York Times, acted as interpreter. This summary of the strategic and military aspects of the discussion would indicate that Castro was in a truculent mood.

Nevertheless, despite his words, I had the impression that braggadoccio may have been mixed with the

toughness. The tone of the discussion was frank and amiable and I had the feeling it was at least possible that he was protesting his strength just a bit too much.

I felt that Castro, in view of the recent vital but secret developments in Moscow and Peking, was trying to stay on the right side of everyone by stressing his loyalty to Marxism, his obduracy and the power of his bargaining position.

He went out of his way, at 5:15 a.m. during a sudden tour of the Havana waterfront, to show me a section of the harbor that was being developed by Moscow as a base for its fishing fleet in western waters. It included a

drydock that had been towed from the Soviet Union and, according to Castro, could service vessels of up to 3,000 tons.

Soviet trawlers, equipped with electronic devices, have at least a para-military value. Peering through the darkness, one wondered whether the drydock was also capable of handling submarines.

It was remarked that Castro seemed to have given contradictory statements to Jean Daniel of the Paris magazine *L'Express* and to Herbert Matthews of *The New York Times* about who initiated the 1962 deal between Moscow and Havana. This placed Soviet medium range ballistic missiles and surface-to-air missiles in Cuba, resulting in the October, 1962, showdown between Washington and Moscow and the removal of the medium-range missiles.

Daniel quoted Castro as having said Moscow had initiated the deal; Matthews quoted him as having said it had been Havana. Castro never did give a precise answer but said:

"I told both Daniel and Matthews that Cuba took the responsibility for the presence of missiles here. It is not easy to clarify the details for security reasons, but both Russia and Cuba participated."

~~"We aspired to get an effective guarantee to ward off the possibility of a U. S. attack on Cuba and to make it evident that any such attack would provoke a nuclear world war — and Russia had its own position."~~

He refused to amplify. Nevertheless, it is perhaps not going too far to infer he meant that Moscow's "position" was that Cuba presented an excellent base from which to threaten U. S. defenses.

Castro dodged an answer to the questions whether the crews at the surface-to-air missile sites were entirely Cuban and when Cuba took control.

When asked how many Soviet military personnel were left in Cuba, and what they were doing, he said:

"There are a number of technicians left and we shall certainly continue their presence as long as the U. S. continues an aggressive policy toward us."

"They are certainly not military tourists. All military technicians have a military capability and would fight in case of an aggression. The function of the Russians here is as technical advisers, but if Cuba were attacked they would serve as combat forces."

Here he stressed that by saying "if Cuba were attacked" he meant an invasion by the U. S. or a country

"instigated by the United States."

Asked how large a combat force the Soviet personnel constituted, he answered that "enough are left to form a solid combat force."

Also asked if there were military personnel here from any other foreign country, he said no.

To a question whether Cuba had held a veto power over Moscow's right to fire the Soviet missiles stationed in Cuba, he gave the following reply:

"That is a theoretical question because circumstances would have made it impossible to have a disagreement. There would have had to be a general war in which Cuba was naturally involved.

~~"Such missiles could not have been used independently of the use of Soviet nuclear missiles on a global basis. Had a conflict arisen elsewhere, as in Berlin, somewhere outside of Cuba, naturally there would have been a general war and these these missiles would have been used."~~

"Nothing was said about the use of missiles if a conflict arose elsewhere in the world in which case their use would have been determined by specific circumstances.

"But it is obvious they would have come into play in any general war. The accord with Moscow on the MRBM's (medium-range ballistic missiles) in Cuba contained the understanding that they would be used in defense of Cuban territory in the event of aggression against Cuba and through agreement between the two contracting parties.

"But in total war all strategic arms would obviously be used by both sides independently of where they were located."

I remarked to Castro that he kept complaining about U-2 flights. Nevertheless, how could the U. S. be assured beyond doubt that all missiles with offensive capabilities and nuclear warheads had been removed and that none had been sent back to Cuba?

The premier became quite agitated and said:

"The first element of security for you is obviously that Cuba cannot produce such weapons. Secondly, you could be reassured if the United States removed any cause for the presence here of such arms by ceasing its aggressive policy.

"Cuba has no obligation to give the United States a guarantee that the missiles and warheads are out, are gone. We do not accept the right of the United States to inspect or control what arms Cuba has."

I said it seemed absolutely necessary for some formula to be arranged that could reassure the U. S. if there was ever to be a thought of ending the U-2 flights.